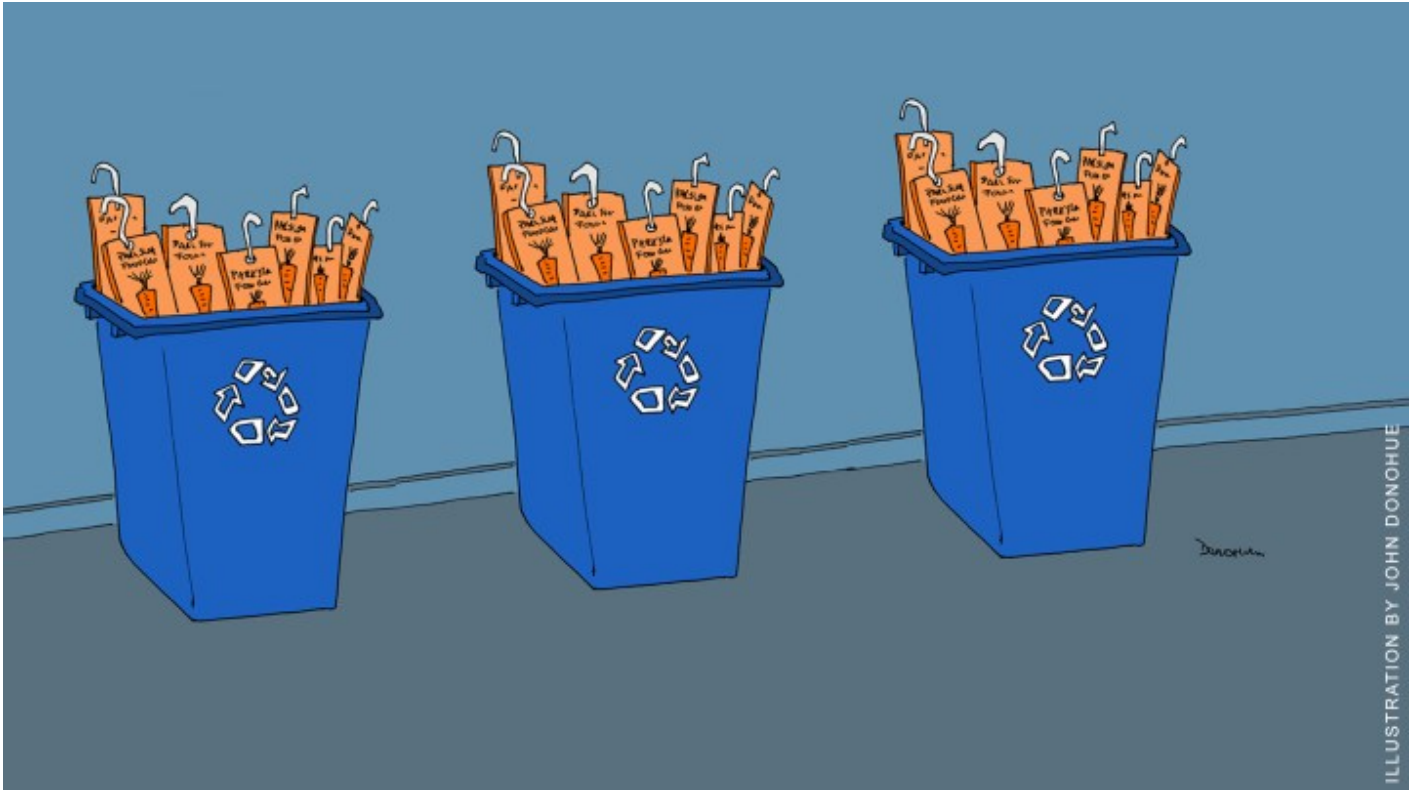


COOP SHOPPING LIMITS AND MASK POLICY CHANGES

March 21, 2023



By Travis Hartman





ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

Two of the most prominent COVID-19 pandemic provisions at the Coop, carrot tags that limit shoppers in the Coop and the masks they wear when inside, have been adjusted.

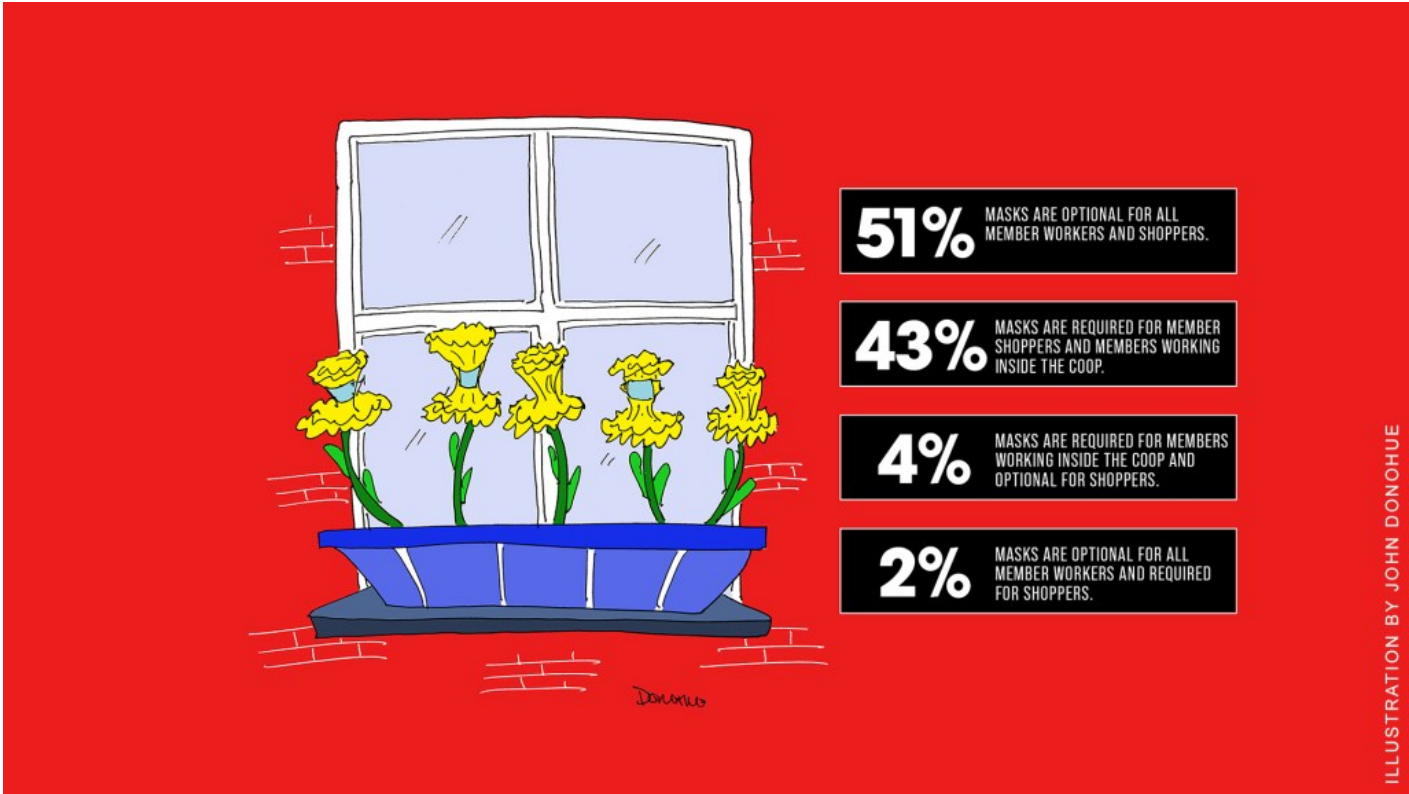
Masks became optional for all working and shopping members, as of Monday, March 20th, following a survey of members.

A poll regarding masks was run for the second time since the policy was enacted at the beginning of the pandemic. Almost 5,000 members participated in the 2023 survey. More than two thirds (68%) voted to make masks optional, with 32% preferring to retain the mask requirement for all working and shopping members, according to a post on the Coop website.

In the post announcing the change, the General Coordinators encouraged members “to make the decision about mask-wearing that best suits your needs or preferences.” They also urged people to “respect other Coop members’ personal choices regarding masks,” and noted that masks will continue to be available in the Coop office.

The GCs emphasized that members should not come to work or shop if they have COVID symptoms or test positive for the virus.

2022 MASK POLL RESULTS



51%: Masks are optional for all member workers and shoppers.

43%: Masks are required for member shoppers and members working inside the Coop.

4%: Masks are required for members working inside the Coop and optional for shoppers.

2%: Masks are optional for all member workers and required for shoppers.

The 2023 results were a shift from the first poll, in 2022. That round garnered a total of 4,615 responses between September 28 and October 12. The Coop had around 14,300 members at the end of September, so about one third of our members participated in the survey.

The 2022 survey resulted in a bare majority for relaxing the policy, with 51% of members taking part in the survey for the masks to be optional for all shoppers and member workers and 43% of members voting for masks being required. Although the optional mask vote has the majority, the General Coordinators considered it too close to change the policy.

The recent poll started in mid-February and required a member ID number.

“We wanted the results of the survey to fairly represent member opinion. Eliminating duplicate responses would be the best way to accomplish that,” said General Coordinator Ann Herpel in an email.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Fahima Islam and Sonia Park were stocking yogurt during their work slot and had slightly different opinions on the future of the mask policy.

“I’m a fan of the masks,” Islam said. “I think it falls under the idea of safety. I still wear masks on the train and indoors around people I don’t know—lots of people have feelings around it, and I’m not trying to impose my will on others.”



Park said, “I honestly don’t care. I would probably wear the mask while doing my shifts but not while shopping,” she said, noting that she spends much less time in the Coop shopping than working, but that she would be happy to comply with the poll no matter the result. “The whole point of this place is community, so I’ll do whatever the Coop decides.”

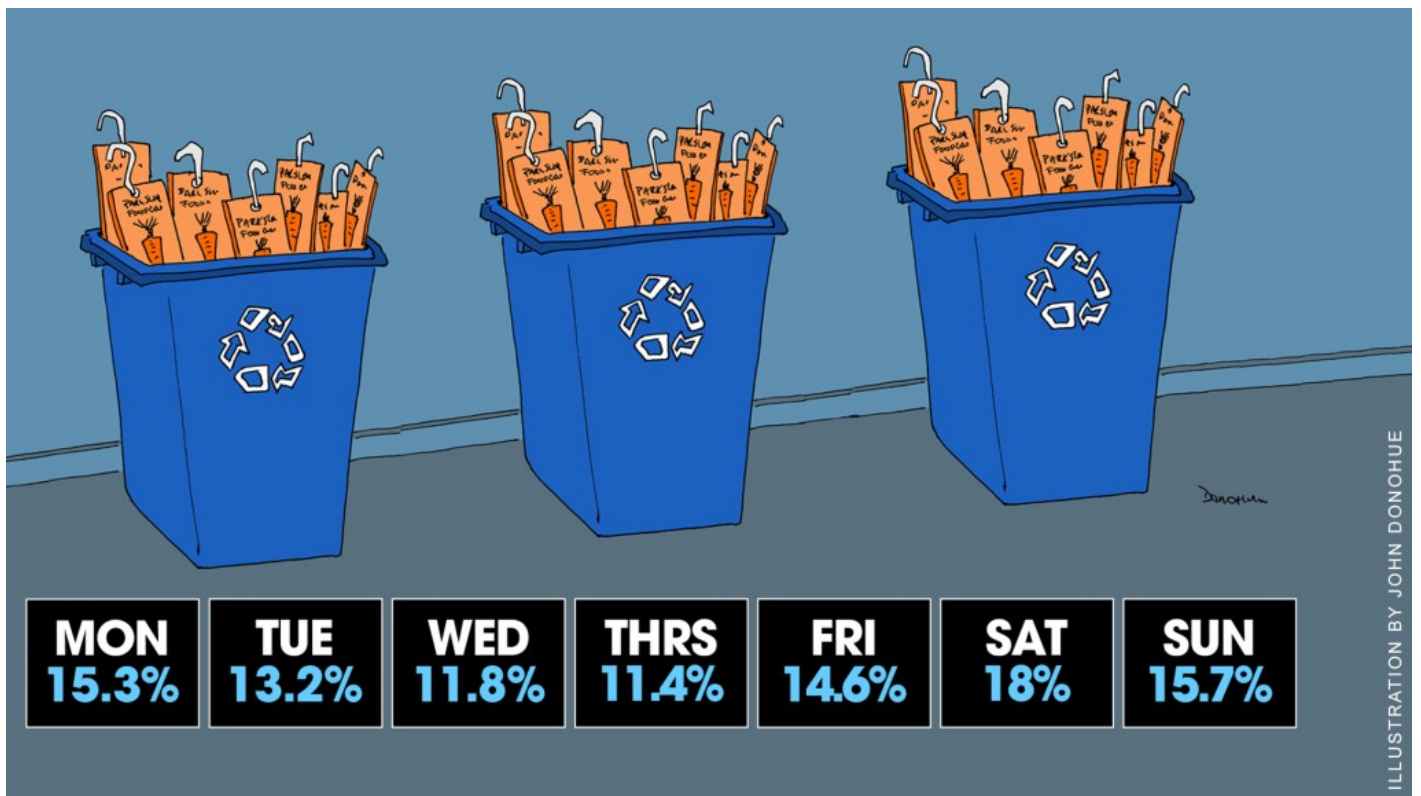
CARROT TAG CHANGE

The removal of mid-week shopping limits via carrot tag was adjusted in mid-February. As of February 17th, members “no longer need to wait outside to enter the Coop or receive a carrot tag to shop,” according to an email sent to members.

The topic was discussed by General Coordinators and Membership Coordinators for some time. The Coop currently allows between 72 and 77 members to shop at any given time, and the staff has noticed tags are regularly available during the middle of

the week for the last year or so.

The data backs this up as well, with dollar volume per day being a good indicator of the number of people shopping. The average weekly sales amounts to just over \$1 million and the breakdown by day shows Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday significantly lower than the other four days.



PERCENTAGE DOLLAR VOLUME BY DAY

Monday, 15.3%

Tuesday, 13.2%

Wednesday, 11.8%

Thursday, 11.4%

Friday, 14.6%

Saturday, 18%

Sunday, 15.7%

“These figures are pretty consistent per season. During the summer, the sales distribution might skew more to Friday and Monday and less on Saturday and Sunday, for example,” said Herpel.

Receiving Coordinator Brian Robinson said his first thought when he heard of the change in the removal of shopper limits was that it might be a way to ease the long-standing problem of shifting some shoppers from the weekend to weekdays to ease congestion. “This is an opportunity to use what we’ve learned over the pandemic—we can use the good stuff that worked.”

While working a shift, Vicky Rodriguez said she thought it was good to try and get out of the adjustments the Coop made for COVID. “I like the tags on the weekends, pre-pandemic it was hectic and really crowded on weekends,” she said.

The Coop has no plans to remove the shopper limits from the other days. Herpel said that members have told the Coop that they appreciate the less crowded shopping and are willing to stand outside as opposed to fighting crowds inside.

Travis Hartman has been a Coop member for over ten years and likes looking for the why behind the who, what, when and where.

BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY'RE RUNNING

March 21, 2023

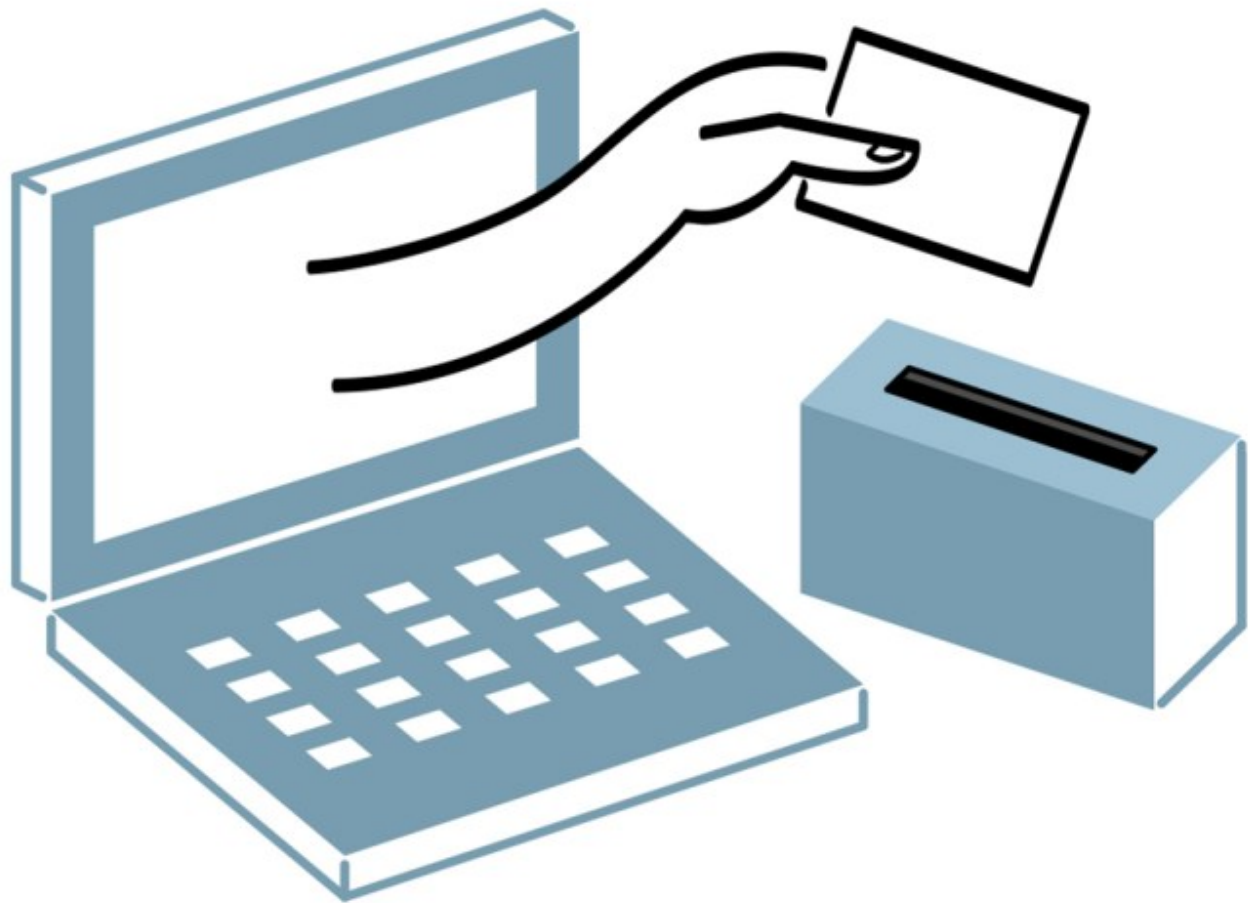


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

FIRST SOME BACKGROUND ON THE COOP'S BOARD

The Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors plays a crucial role in running the Coop. The Board makes its decisions based on the advice of members who attend the monthly General Meeting. There are five seats on this Board, and each term lasts

three years. Members submit their applications to run for open seats in March each year and candidate statements are published in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Nominees will have the opportunity to introduce themselves at the March 28 General Meeting. All members can start voting online via a Coop-wide email that will go out in late May, and results will be announced at the Annual Meeting on June 27.

This year there is one candidate for one open seat. (There were two candidates who self-nominated by the deadline but one of them dropped out shortly thereafter.) Here is the 2023 candidate and his statement:

TIMOTHY HOSPODAR



When some mom friends asked if I was running for the Board, I hadn't really decided. Last year, I tried joining the Board without success. I had been on the fence about running again, despite my interest in supporting our community in a different capacity.

Coincidentally, Nikki and Anna are both elementary school teachers, and all our kids are close in age. They've been having difficulty scheduling shifts at the Coop because of the pause on Coop-provided childcare. While sharing a gentle reminder that child-

care is expected to return this year, I remembered that we can all think of a change we'd like to see at the Coop. Acknowledging that it's a rare exception for the Board to approve an action that didn't echo the consensus of the membership, I'd like to bring to the Board my experience with facilitating alignment for diverse stakeholders.

Maybe the Board needs a member that's a dad to a school-aged kiddo. I trust that the Coop's membership is made up of a significant number of parents, and electing a parent to the Board adds a dimension of representation that's important in community. In an interest to keep this introduction short, I'll reference last year's *Gazette* wherein I drew an analogy between parenthood and stewardship of the Coop and other passions. Rather than dig out digital archives, I encourage you to join March's GM and I'll rehash the bit. I also encourage all readers to join all the GMs, in case you weren't aware that attendance at the meetings needs a boost!

THE COOP'S FIRST 50 YEARS: HERE ARE 10 GREAT THINGS ABOUT THE PSFC

March 21, 2023



By Liora Fishman

The Coop is approaching its 50-year anniversary. It's hard to believe that the Coop has remained an institution within Brooklyn for five decades, weathering all of the changes—global, economic, and local—that have come at us.

As a relatively new member, I've learned to love the Coop for all of its eccentricities. And eccentricities abound: I remember my first visit, looking aimlessly for eggs in the dairy section, only to find them next to the tofu, beside spices and racks of beer. In the swirl of Sunday shoppers, I shuffled into a line that I soon realized was Express—which I did not qualify for. As I weaved through the crowd, toward the regular line, I picked up a hyaluronic eye mask and thought: *They sell that here?*

Beginner's confusion aside, the Coop has brought many great things into my life: I've

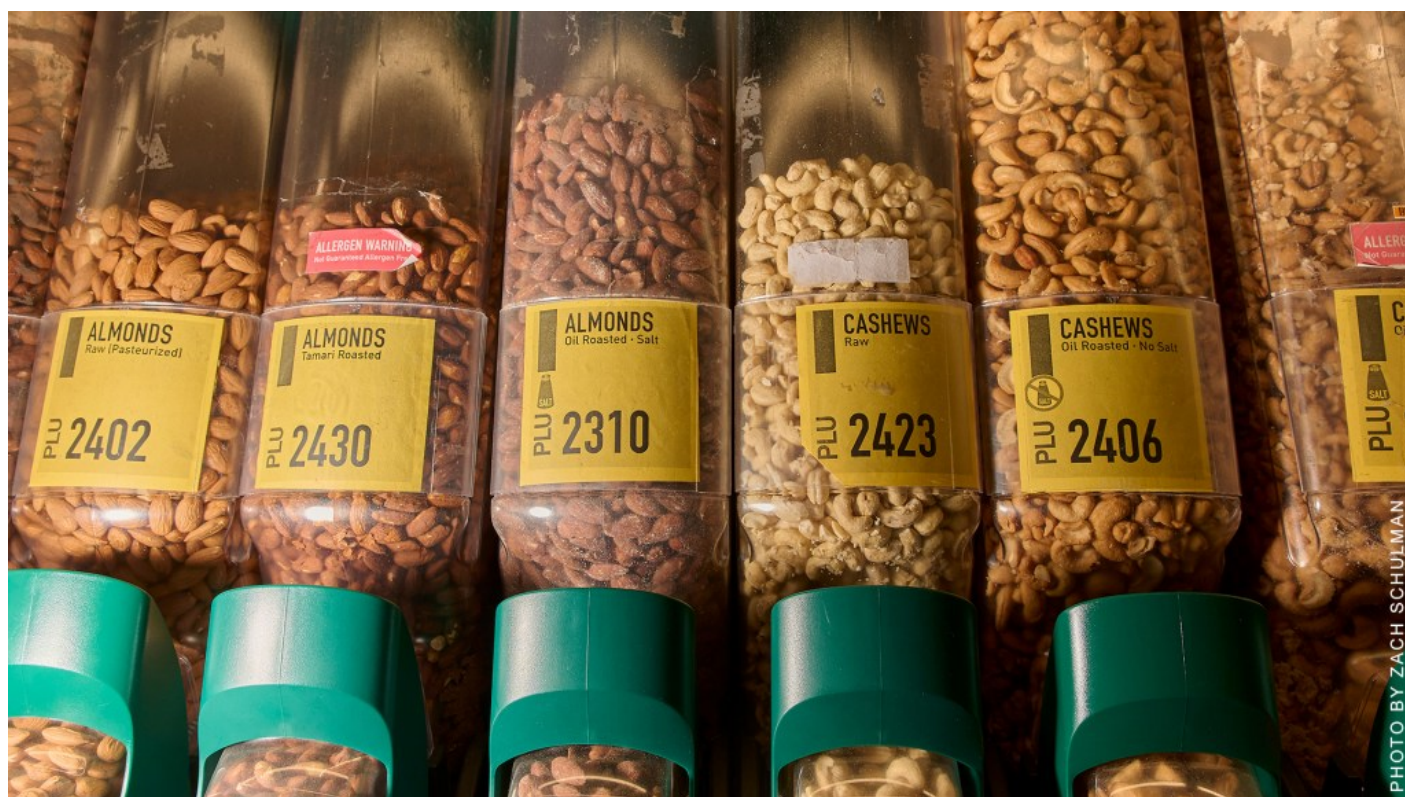
run into old friends with whom I've reconnected, have discovered some of my favorite snacks (the Hudson Harvest Cinnamon Applesauce) and learned that there are more kinds of cheeses than I'd ever imagined.

There are many more reasons to love the Coop, and while I'd love to list 50 things that make the Coop great, for brevity's sake, I'll keep it to 10:



PHOTO BY ZACH SCHULMAN

1. **The “Next Member” sign:** Yes, *that* sign. As fickle as it may be, the flashing sign has become an endearing greeter, beckoning me inside as I hastily fish around my tote bag for my membership card. When lines are long and the weather is cold, I keep my eyes on the sign, knowing that the closer those flashing lights, the closer I am to the calming chaos of the Coop.
2. **The music:** I am someone who often gets stressed out by grocery shopping and, admittedly, the Coop is not a place that quells that anxiety—especially on its busier days. Yet, about 10 minutes into my shopping trip, I find myself scrolling through my grocery list on my phone, tapping my foot to the beat of a song that’s comforting, upbeat and nostalgic all at once. Carole King and Donna Summer are two of my favorite artists to shop to at the Coop.



3. **The bulk aisle:** Sure, other grocery stores have bulk aisles, but I’ve never seen one as thoroughly cared for, and with such diverse offerings, as the Coop’s. When I pass all the different kinds of rice, plus a multitude of other items, I inevitably leave with an additional five products that weren’t on my list. The figs (with stems) and

Valrhona chocolates are often the culprits.



PHOTO BY ZACH SCHULMAN

4. **The dogs outside the Coop entrance:** Perhaps this one is just as polarizing as the “Next Member” sign, but I love meeting dogs on my way in and out of the Coop. They’re often unbelievably well-behaved, patiently waiting for their owners. I love my dog, but she simply could never.

5. **Limited-time items:** Whenever I find my way to the shelves with seasonal or limited-time offerings, I find myself whipping out my phone to see what I could make with an ingredient I've never heard of or a shape of pasta I've never seen. The section is often the source of inspiration for my Sunday night dinner.



6. **The plants:** Speaking of limited-time items, I'm a sucker for plants and seeds and

just about anything garden related—and there’s no better time for a gardening aficionado to be at the Coop than early spring, when the product aisle is blooming with plants and seeds. Even though my small apartment does not have room for more plants, I know that more will still find their way into my living room this spring from the plant selection at the Coop.

7. **The Linewaiters’ Gazette:** At the risk of sounding self-congratulatory, I think the very existence of the *Gazette* is a testament to the Coop being so much more than a simple grocery store. One glance through the *Gazette* and you’ll see how much the staff and members care about the Coop and the community around it. In a culture of abundant apathy, it’s heartening to be a part of a community that, put simply, *cares*.



8. **Shifts:** At first I found the concept of working shifts daunting as well as exciting. But I’ve come to appreciate the personal connection created between the Coop and the community within and surrounding it, which is established after working even one shift. Plus, there is truly something for everyone: An extrovert may prefer check-

out, where they can converse about tonight's dinner recipes and new products. An introvert may prefer to put their headphones in and stock the produce aisle. Whatever you fancy, there's a shift that can cater to that.

9. **Committees:** The Coop offers so many opportunities for involvement, and committees are a great way to get started. From the Animal Welfare Committee to the Environmental Committee, there is a place where each and every member can deepen their connection to the Coop by aligning their membership with their values.



10. **"500 Miles to Local":** Perhaps my favorite thing about the Coop is the continuous assurance that the food we're sourcing is local. The "500 Miles to Local" policy was one that prompted me to join the Coop in the first place. The Coop's website says it best: "Buying local ensures two important benefits. The first is the benefit that our members reap: fresh product. The second is the support we give to our regional economy."

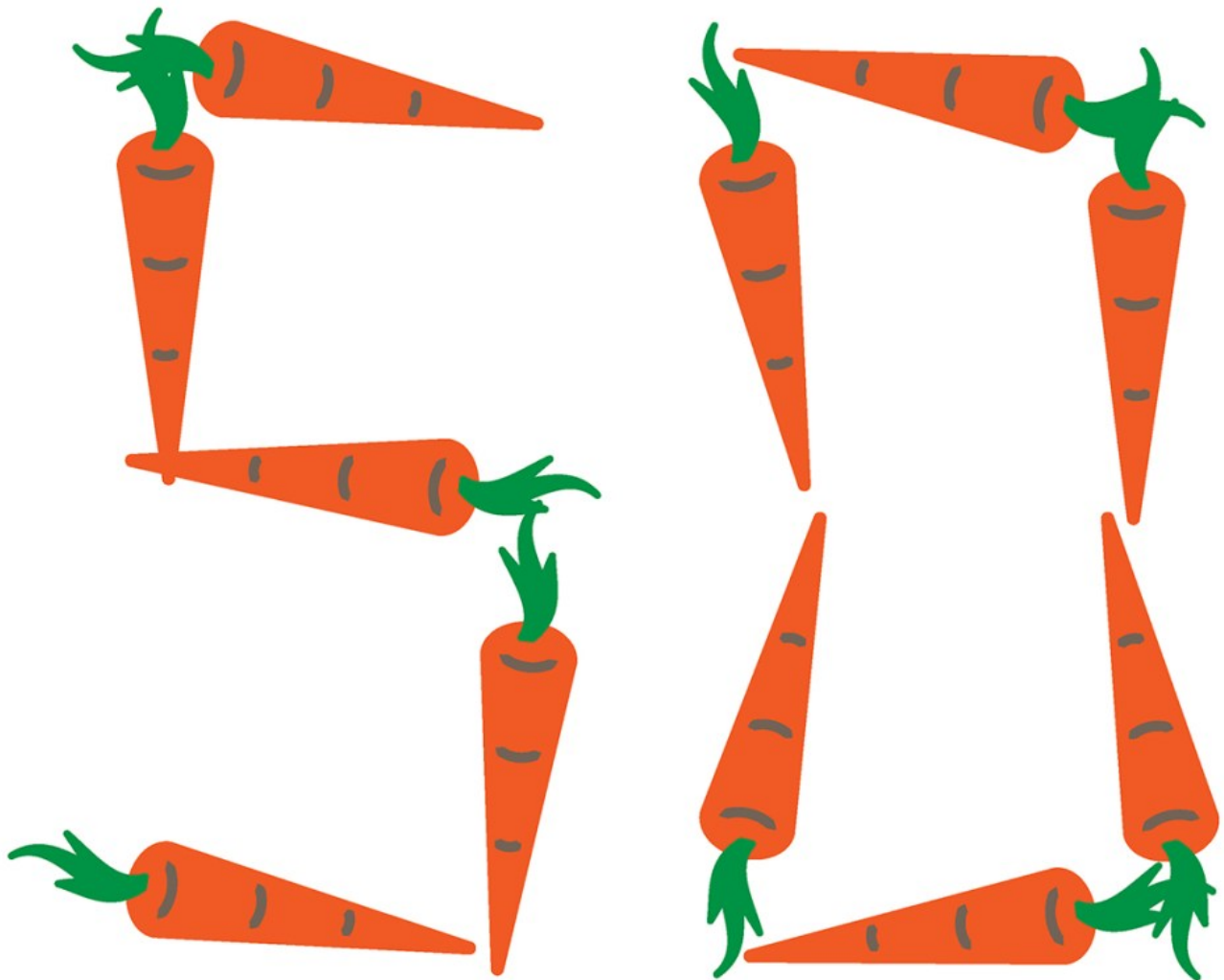


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

In an increasingly globalized economy, we're often taken further and further away from the source of our food. The Coop allows us to connect on a deeper level to the food we're eating, where it's coming from and how it's made. It allows us to shop more sustainably (in the bulk aisle, for example), and to foster a sense of community while we're at it. In 50 years, the Coop has created a thoughtful and invested community, built around a shared love of ethical consumption and—at the end of the day—great food.

Liora Fishman lives in Prospect Heights, and has a dog named Ollie.

Editor's note: This is part of an occasional series marking the Coop's 50th.

PSFC HELPS SOUP KITCHEN FEED HUNDREDS OF MIGRANTS

March 21, 2023



By Hayley Gorenberg

The Coop and community members have leaped into action to help a local soup kitchen and food pantry feed hundreds of migrants who have arrived in New York.

Around the New Year, “We saw a huge influx of people, and we didn’t know what was

happening!” said Shanice Branch, the development director at Community Help in Park Slope, Inc. (CHiPS). A survey the organization distributed in Spanish and English quickly helped scope out the needs of newly arrived migrants, and CHiPS expanded its food pantry availability from a couple hours once weekly to two days each week. Lunch demand jumped from about 225 lunches per day to 300, then, on a recent day, to 338—until one day in February, CHiPS ran out of food.



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDDLE

THE COOP'S ROLE

The February PSFC food drive—one of two or three annually that are organized for CHiPS—helped stave off local hunger with 67 large banana boxes full of food and cash donations totaling \$2,367.92, according to General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky, who joined the CHiPS board last year to further reinforce the Coop's half-century partnership with the organization. “They were looking to cement that relationship by having someone from the Coop be part of their board, so I was happy to do that. I absolutely

believe in their mission and everything they are doing.”



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

Though the Coop has long donated edible but unsalable produce and has run drives for additional items, Astrinsky said that upon joining the board she “realized that their food operations person had never actually been to the Coop—so I invited her, and we walked through the aisles, and she told me what kind of things people were looking for.” The walk-through helped sharpen the Coop’s response to CHiPS’ newest clientele, including families seeking asylum who are housed at a nearby hotel and single men at a local shelter.

THE DONATED FOOD



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDDLE

“It used to be that all our drives were basic pantry food that people could cook at home,” Astrinsky said. “The usual pasta, sauce, beans, some canned fish, some peanut butter, jelly—kinda more the staple-y things.”

By contrast, for the most recent food drive, the Coop pre-ordered pouches of food acceptable in shelters that won’t allow pop-top metal cans, as well as single-serve items in packaging that could be ripped open by hand. “Plastic fruit cups, juice boxes, a lot of one-time things,” were requested, with “a lot more packaging than we’re used to selling,” Astrinsky conceded. “They wanted cookies that were single-serve cookies. We don’t usually sell those, but people just needed snacks to tide them over to the next meal.” The Coop ordered and featured the items for purchase and donation when the food drive geared up.

WHAT COOP MEMBERS ARE DOING

Membership Coordinator Jacquelyn Scaduto and a group of members experienced in

running PSFC food drives pitched the drive over the paging system, further alerting members about what CHiPS needed. The Coop displayed key items on endcaps and filled banana boxes to load on carts bound for the food kitchen. Astrinsky, herself a Coop member since 1992 and a General Coordinator for over a decade, marveled at the response, even as she said it was not unusual. “The numbers are amazing. [Members] always rise to the occasion!”

In addition to the drives, the Coop rolls U-boats of produce to CHiPS every couple of days, and some Coop members fulfill their shifts by working in the CHiPS kitchen. “Some of the most consistent volunteers [at CHiPS] are Coop members,” Astrinsky said. The shift system contributes to regular scheduling, “and they just love it,” she remarked. “They’ve been doing their shifts for many years.” The Coop has gradually added more shifts for cooking and pantry food distribution, depending on the needs at CHiPS.

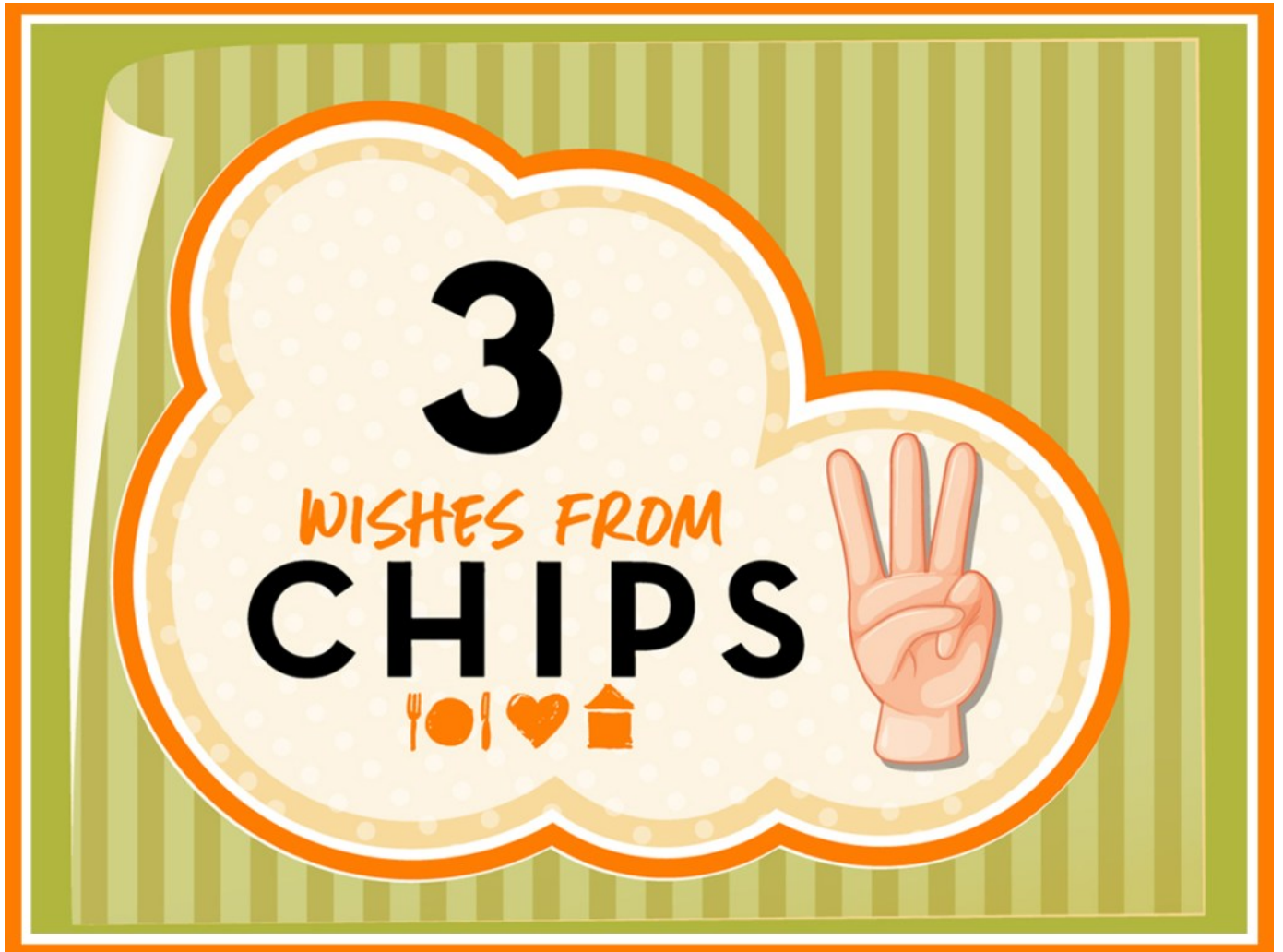


Mark Hoglund (CHiPS Volunteer), Melissa Hart (Co-op Member) and Yolanda Johnson

PHOTO BY JOHN MIDDLE

(CHiPs Volunteer)

CHiPS hopes community members will help meet their ongoing needs by contributing in three specific ways, according to Development Director Shanice Branch.





First, the organization hopes for direct financial donations, and plans to use the money to buy food in bulk from wholesalers.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE



Second, CHiPS asks that people purchase items from the organization's "wish list."

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE



Third, CHiPS welcomes people to supply snacks, single-serve items, and microwavable food items through additional drives or direct donations.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

The CHiPS wish list is available [here](#).



Brother Thomas Barton, Shanice Smith-Branch, Melissa Newark and Pauline Auguste. Donations are accepted for drop off Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at CHiPS, located at 200 4th Ave., between Sackett Street and Degraw Street. CHiPS will also accept hot meals and cooked food for lunch (11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.). “Some people bring trays of lasagna, chicken and rice,” Branch said. “Restaurants are dropping off, too. Someone brought a roasted pork shoulder!”

Hayley Gorenberg joined the Coop in 1993 and became a Gazette reporter soon thereafter.